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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, December 26, 1932

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Christmas Left-Overs." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics
U.S.D.A.

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The morning after the day before. Show me the housewife who isn't considering how to use all those odds and ends left in the refrigerator. And the morning after Christmas, show me the housewife whose mind doesn't register something like this: "Wanted: An easy but appetizing meal made from Christmas left-overs." Maybe the relatives are still visiting and you want to serve them a good dinner, yet you don't want to spend long hours fixing up something new. So the problem is to plan a good meal, easy to get ready and on the table, using food the second day but being sure it hasn't that left-over look.

Here's what the Menu Specialist suggests for dinner on the day after Christmas: Cream of tomato soup; Cold sliced Christmas fowl or cold sliced roast; Left-over mashed potatoes, made into cakes, and fried; Spinach or some other green vegetable; for salad, diced fruit and jelly salad with tart fruit-salad dressing served on lettuce. For dessert, Mince pie and coffee. Or, Fruit cake and coffee. Or fig pudding, re-heated in the upper part of the double boiler and served in slices on individual plates. If you haven't enough lemon sauce left from yesterday, stir up some hard sauce for the pudding.

What's the trouble with most left-over meals? Where did left-overs get their poor reputation? What makes children turn up their noses and husbands look sad when a meal of left-overs is mentioned? Generally, the answer is: Carelessness. Careless preparation. Careless serving. The food neither looks nor tastes appetizing. But put a little extra thought and care on left-overs and see what a success your meal can be. Second-time foods need to look tempting when they come on the table. Dainty, attractive serving is very important. So is careful seasoning. So is having the hot dishes hot, and the cold dishes cold. Sometimes you'll want to disguise a left-over food, give it both a new flavor and a new appearance but often all you need to do is to serve the food carefully and not bother with much fixing and trimming.

In these days when none of us can afford to waste food, no left-overs should go begging just because we didn't trouble to make them attractive on their second appearance.

Cream of tomato soup. That was the first item on our menu. The old recipes used to suggest adding soda to the tomatoes so the soup wouldn't curdle when the milk and tomatoes were combined. Nowadays we know that soda in vegetables destroys their valuable vitamin content. One of the big reasons why tomatoes are so good for us is the vitamins they contain. If you add soda, you not only lose some of that value but you may also give the soup a poor flavor. So up-to-date cooks make their cream of tomato soup like this:

They thicken the tomato juice with flour first. Then they pour that tomato sauce into the milk, beat the mixture and heat quickly, but they don't let the mixture boil. They serve the soup at once. By thickening the tomatoes and by pouring the acid in the milk, you help prevent this curdling action.

Another question that appears with this menu is: How to cook spinach so that it will retain its attractive green color and fresh flavor?

I'll tell you what the specialists advise about cooking spinach. When you have picked over the spinach, discarded the wilted leaves and cut off the stem ends, you wash the spinach in several waters to remove the grit. If the spinach is young and tender you won't need to add any water for cooking. You can just cook it in the water that clings to the leaves after washing. Start the cooking at moderate heat and cover the kettle at first. Turn the spinach now and then until thoroughly wilted. Then remove the cover from the kettle and stir the spinach frequently. About two pounds of spinach will require from 10 to 15 minutes of cooking this way. Remove the spinach from the stove, drain it, chop it fine, season with salt, pepper and butter or other fat--and serve.

Suppose, now, that your spinach is a little older, that the leaves aren't so young and tender. In this case, cook your spinach in a small quantity of water for about twenty minutes. Have the water slightly salted and boiling before you drop the spinach in. And use no lid on the kettle. When the spinach has cooked tender, drain it, chop it and season it with salt, pepper and butter or other fat.

Sometimes, to vary the dish, you can give spinach a different flavor by putting a small amount of finely cut onion in the fat before you add it to the spinach. Or you can season your spinach with vinegar and bits of crisped salt pork or bacon. Or serve it with olive oil and sections of lemon.

Speaking of garnishes for your steaming bowl of greens, sliced or chopped hard-cooked egg is one of the most attractive.

I'll go over the menu once again to be sure I didn't miss anything. Cream of tomato soup; Mashed potato cakes, either baked or fried; Spinach or some other green vegetable; Fruit and left-over Jellied salad; Mince pie, fruit cake or steamed fig pudding--depending on what you have left--with coffee.

Tomorrow: "Scheduling Your Time."

